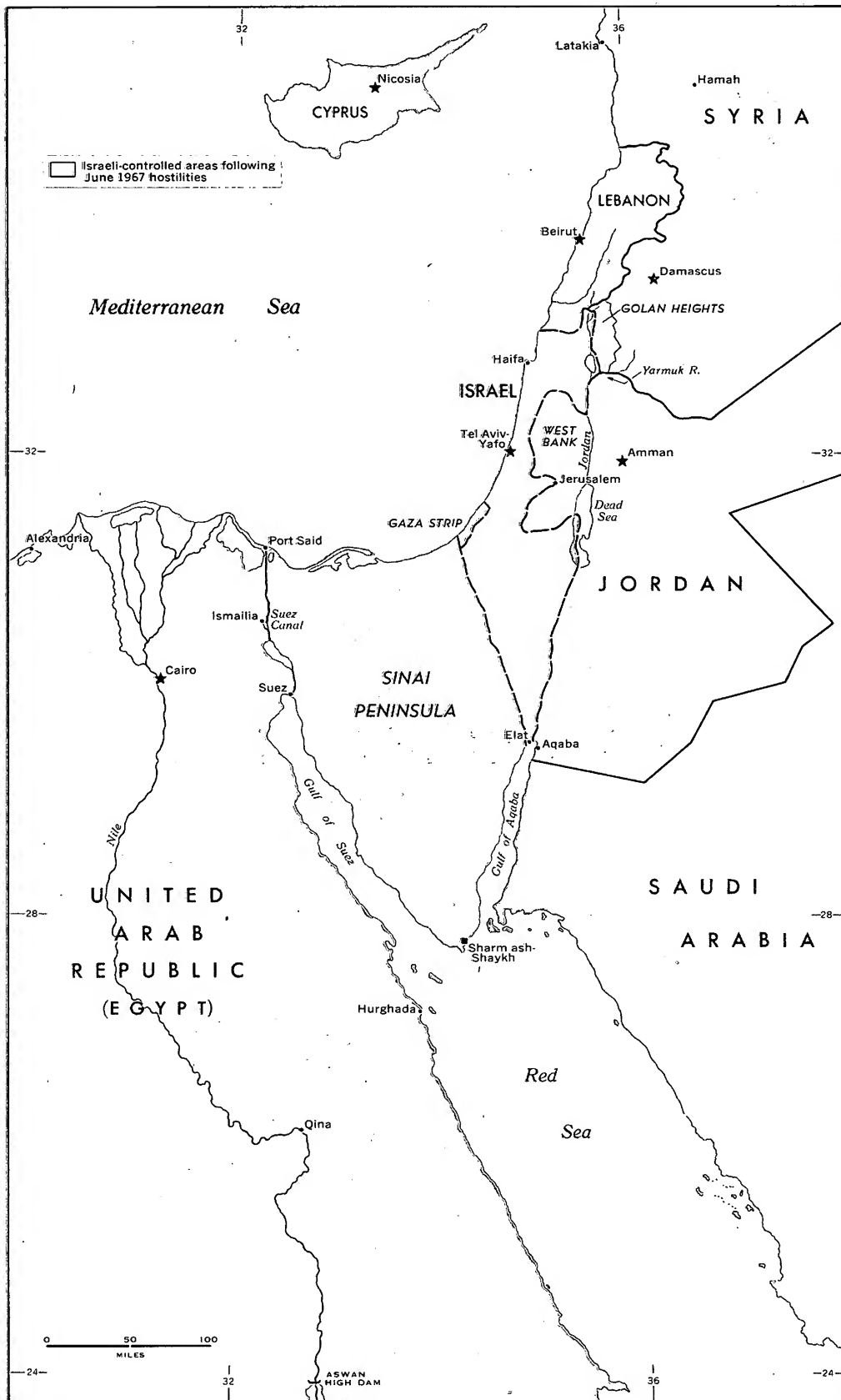


The President's Daily Brief

16 April 1969

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17 April 1969

LATE NOTES FOR THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF OF
16 APRIL 1969

I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST

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President Hilu of Lebanon says his government has made a major decision to confront fedayeen groups by force if they attempt to cross the Lebanese-Israeli border. This has not yet caused difficulties between Muslim and Christian officers in the Lebanese Army despite the general Muslim sympathy for the fedayeen movement. Hilu is convinced that all fedayeen groups are basically revolutionary in their thinking and modus operandi and will eventually become a captive of Moscow or Peking despite their current backing by conservative Arab states. He also understood from his Jordanian contacts that a major confrontation between Amman and the fedayeen would have to take place in the near future.

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VIETNAM

The limited activity in the I Corps area on 16-17 April adds substance to other indications that the Communists intend to step up their military activity in the northern provinces in the weeks ahead. In addition to the indicated movement of elements of two divisions and other independent units toward I Corps, there are intercepts revealing increased supply

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and heavy weapons movements into the Laotian panhandle.
(Central Intelligence Bulletin)

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There is nothing of significance to report on Europe or Soviet Affairs.

II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

KOREA

The destroyer USS Tucker confirms it has picked up two bodies in debris 17 miles from the crash site of the EC-121 plane. [REDACTED]

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The North Korean Defense Minister General Choi Hyun, apparently talking to the officers and men of the North Korean army unit responsible for the shootdown, thanked them for their action and was quoted as saying that the flight was part of planned preparations for "inciting a new war in Korea. ... the situation remains tense and it shows that a war may break out again at any moment." The speech appears to be part of the North Korean effort [REDACTED] to keep its units alert to any military reaction from either the US or South Korea. [REDACTED]

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A Chinese Communist newspaper in Hong Kong bitterly attacked the "despicable Russian revisionists for shamelessly and brazenly selling out North Korea by sending two warships to help the Americans find the bits and pieces of the marauding plane. ...the Russian action would be acceptable if this were a civilian plane and not a military intruder." (AP 283, 17 Apr)

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I. MAJOR PROBLEMS

MIDDLE EAST

Five major fedayeen organizations on Tuesday flatly rejected Husayn's recent proposals for a Middle East settlement. They have of course consistently denounced all proposals involving a negotiated settlement, and in the bargain have made it clear that neither Nasir nor Husayn speaks for them in international forums. What is significant about this latest blast, however, is that Husayn has been singled out for special treatment. This is yet another sign that the tenuous six-month truce between the fedayeen and the Jordanian Government is coming to an end.

The government has fumbled badly in its dealings with the terrorists during Husayn's current trip abroad. When he returns home tomorrow, Husayn will have his work cut out for him if he decides to try to rein them in again.

* * *

The Lebanese Army, no doubt much to its own surprise, managed to persuade the some 100 terrorists it clashed with yesterday to withdraw. After considerable dickering, the terrorists got into Lebanese trucks and were taken to the Syrian border.

SOVIET AFFAIRS

The Czechoslovak central committee meeting tomorrow will open in a charged atmosphere as it seeks to grapple

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with the aftermath of the recent anti-Soviet riots. The Soviets are maintaining pressure on the Dubcek regime to purge the liberals from the leadership, to give a greater role to party conservatives, and to reimpose party control over all elements of Czech society.

At a minimum, central committee conservatives, who are in a minority, probably will press for an end to open expression of anti-Soviet sentiment, genuine control of the press, and tighter discipline over party members. Moderates and liberals will probably go along, but they may be expected to try to place limits on the censor's authority over the media and will undoubtedly oppose any other conservative proposals to restrict personal rights and liberties. The leadership will probably try to steer a middle course. Moscow has approved a party action program adopted last November and seems to be pressing for its implementation rather than revision.

Dubcek is reported ready to propose a reduction in size of the 21-man party presidium. This will probably mean the ouster or demotion of several liberals, including Smrkovsky, as well as others who came into prominence during the invasion in August 1968. The moderates, however, seem to have at least an even chance of retaining their posts.

It is unclear how the population will react to personnel and policy shifts which it considers to be too retrogressive. Students particularly are unreconciled

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to the reimposition of strict domestic policies and their public declarations have been uncompromisingly anti-Soviet. Trade union leaders have pledged their cooperation in trying to calm the situation, but they cannot guarantee the performance of the workers, who might join the students if the latter go into the streets.

* * *

An unusually harsh winter has gotten the Soviet economy off to a poor start for 1969. Bad weather not only affected the agricultural sector (large areas of winter wheat will have to be resown), but also caused disruption in production and transportation schedules and shortages of fuel and raw materials. Moscow blames these factors "to a significant degree" for the slow growth rate in industrial production in January and February (only 2 1/2 percent above the corresponding period of 1968; normally the Soviets shoot for a growth rate of about 6-8 percent).

VIETNAM

There is nothing significant to report.

EUROPE

There is nothing significant to report.

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II. OTHER IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS

KOREA

North Korean military activity since the shootdown has been cautious.

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No movement of North Korean forces has been detected, nor has there been any aircraft activity in reaction to the search.

The South Koreans are showing some concern over US resolve in dealing with North Korean attacks and the latest incident is being cited as evidence that South Korea needs more US military assistance. Calls for retaliation also continue to be heard in Seoul.

In Tokyo, opponents of the US-Japan security treaty are trying to use the incident to exploit Japanese fears of becoming involved in a Korean conflict. Both the Socialists and the Communists are stressing that the aircraft was from a US base in Japan. Foreign Minister Aichi was hit by a barrage of opposition questions in the Diet today.

For its part, Moscow remains noncommittal in its press coverage, although it obviously does not mind any inferences Pyongyang may care to read into the participation of Soviet naval units in the search.

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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

A recent outbreak of terrorism--much of it Communist-inspired--is likely to draw some drastic reprisals from the military which has been the main target of the ambushes. Violence begets violence in the Dominican Republic, and the situation could deteriorate if there is an escalation of retaliatory killings. All this has put President Balaguer in a difficult position. He does not want to be left open to charges of permitting the military to run amuck, yet because his commanders are his main source of support, he does not want to put them on too tight a leash.

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